DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 154 524 EA 010 624

AUTHOR Haun, Francis R.
TITLE Reduction in Force: Is Your Board Prepared?
PUB DATE 2 Apr 78
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National School Boards Association (38th, Anaheim, California, April 1-4, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Board of Education Policy; *Declining Enrollment; Elementary Secondary Education; Job Layoff; *Personnel Policy; *Policy Formation; *Reduction in Force; School Districts; State Surveys; Tables (Data); *Teacher Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Nebraska

ABSTRACT

To help ameliorate the adverse effects of reduction in force (RIF), school districts facing declining enrollments should develop and adopt RIF policies before they are needed. School district officials should compile up-to-date enrollment projections and anticipated staff needs. The board of education should take care to inform the public and to convince the community that every attempt has been made by the board to be as fair as possible to affected individuals. Alternatives to job layoff (such as normal teacher attrition through retirement) should be exhausted first. To ensure that the brightest and most capable teachers are retained, the district should institute evaluation procedures that measure the relative effectiveness of the classroom teacher. A sample individualized teacher profile evaluation form, as well as statistical data gathered in a survey of Nebraska school districts' RIF policies, is included. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Francis R. Haun

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

REDUCTION IN FORCE: IS YOUR BOARD PREPARED?

Francis R. Haun: NSBA, Clinic B-30, April 2, 1978

Declining enrollments in the majority of public school districts in the United States is a fact of life. Among school board members and administrators attending the 1975 National School Boards Association Convention, 22 percent responding in a survey indicated that "declining enrollment" was one of their district's three major problems. The percentage was higher for officials in districts with less than 1,000 pupils--30 percent listed it as one of three major problems ("Rising costs of supplies" was the major problem . . .) . Viewed regionally, the Midwestern respondents most frequently listed "declining enrollment" as a major problem; Southern respondents, least frequently.[5]

The evidence is clear that we have a complete reversal of school population trends in most school districts. What effect does this trend have on staff, facilities and policies?

One recent author suggests that dwindling enrollments usually produce a ripple-in-the-pond effect: One toss of the pebble causes countless concentric wavelets to form outward from it. To illustrate as the number of pupils declines, so does the need for teachers and classroom space. Then as the teacher force is reduced, the demand for supervisors, principals and other administrators narrows.[6]

Unfortunately, most school boards hoped that normal attrition would take care of the anticipated need for staff reduction. In

Francis Haun is superintendent of the Wayne, Nebraska public schools. Ed.D., U. of Nebraska

ED154524

EA 010 624

many school districts this was, in fact, the case at the elementary level. Now, however, what was essentially a problem of the elementary school is becoming one of the junior high schools, middle schools and in a period of three or four years, that of the senior high school. Thus it is that school supervisors must become aware of a need for policies coping with RIF.

M. Chester Nolte provides a terse definition of RIF: to reduce, cut, thin down to size; often used as a verb, as in "Failing enrollments and rising costs forced the school board to RIF half the staff." Slang: bust, pink slip, fire. Antonyms: increase, expand, promote, elevate.[8]

So now that we know what RIF is, how do we go about providing for it in an orderly manner with the major thrust being to retain the brightest and most capable teachers?

If there is a simple solution, no one has yet found it in or at least disseminated it in the realm of public education. At best RIF is a distasteful activity. At its worst RIF is totally nasty, causing distrust and disruption within a faculty and staff that lasts for many years. This it is that careful work by each school district must be done to prepare RIF policies to serve its immediate and long range needs. It simply won't do to write the neighboring school district superintendent, obtain a copy of their districts policy and use it for your own.

There are several considerations that are basic, however, to the development of RIF policies. Some of the most frequently stressed are worthy of comment.

There is concensus among authorities that RIF policies should be developed and adopted before you need them. A survey conducted in 1973, however, indicated that scarcely 50 negotiated agreements between teachers and boards carried provisions for layoffs of teachers and other staff members. This is true even though by 1980 the projection of public school enrollments is an estimated 45 million--some 2 million less than in 1975.[8] Part of this delay in developing RIF policies is that the process, even with policies, of informing staff that their services are no longer required is painful. Nevertheless, school administrators are left with a problem wanting immediate as well as long-term solutions.[7]

Another important consideration is to make certain that school district officials have compiled up-to-date projected enrollment figures and subsequent anticipated staffing needs. Projected staffing needs calls for careful consideration of possible retirements, normal teacher attrition and the possibilities of re-assigning teachers to other schools within the district.[4] It is important to consider all alternatives to reducing staff before actually facing the prospect of writing lay-off letters. One alternative that appears throughout the literature is to first lay off part time or substitute employees assuming, of course, that all other economy measures have been taken.

It is imperative that the public be completely knowledgeable about the reasons why the school district is placed in a position for RIF. This often is accomplished by press releases to the various news media stating facts of the situation. Board meetings where

discussions regarding the adoption of RIF policies should be open to the press and the public. There should be a honest, deliberate attempt to convince, not only those affected, but also the public, that every attempt has been made by the board of education to be fair as possible to affected individuals. There should also be an honest effort to retain, so far as possible, the brightest and most competent teachers.[9] It would seem appropriate, however, to be sure that a policy declares that the basic reason that teachers are laid off is because of declining enrollments or financial considerations rather than for incompetence. The United States Supreme Court has ruled that tentured teachers have property rights to their jobs. A school board therefore cannot deprive such teachers of their essential civil right to be able to seek employment in another school district.[6]

It would thus appear necessary for a board of education to work closely with their attorney in developing RIF policies to insure that all of the considerations cited above be within the framework of Constitutional, State and Case law.

RIF Policies in Nebraska School Districts

Research on existing RIF policies in Nebraska School Districts was done in July of 1976. To accomplish this, a letter was mailed to 34 schools which represented a randomly selected sample drawn from 46 of Nebraska's largest school districts. Thirty one out of 34 possible responses were received. Only seven of the 34 schools contacted had adopted policies for RIF. Four schools indicated that they were working on RIF policies. The remaining schools simply indicated that

they had not adopted RIF policies. A listing of the schools who responded to the letter and who also sent copies of their RIF policies can be found in Table 1.

It was noted earlier that very few schools selected from a National sample had adopted formal RIF policies. It would appear that Nebraska School Districts are also slow to accept the need for such policies.

An analysis of RIF policies that have been adopted by Nebraska School Districts is shown in Table 2. As might be expected, all schools with adopted policies gave consideration to the length of time that an employer had served the school district. Six sets of policies contained specific dates and procedures for notifying staff that they would not be re-employed due to budgetary or enrollment reasons. Five school districts gave consideration to certification and endorsements as well as recommendations from school administrators. The same number of school districts gave consideration to re-call priviledges and to retention of at least two years of salary schedule rights. An interesting twist to the problem of RIF was recognized by four districts who had inserted into their policies a provision for adhering to the requirements of affirmative action legislation.

A deliberate attempt was made to locate RIF policies which had provisions for retaining the brightest and most competent teachers. It is interesting to note that only two Nebraska School Districts addressed themselves to this criteria. Along this same line, only two respondents had policies which showed concern for the degrees or preparation that an employer possessed.

Only one district had a policy statement giving a teacher the right to be a substitute teacher which would, on the surface at least, appear to be an important consideration for relieving the harshness of the layoff procedure.

A Model Policy

The approaches to declining enrollments mentioned previously give one an idea of the possible theoretical frameworks upon which policies might be formulated. Policies are important in that they give order to what otherwise might be a chaotic situation. When a change such as declining enrollment is forecast, the efficient administrator will assure competent management by thoroughly researching his own situation along with other similar ones and suggest to the school board adoption of policies which will reflect a thorough understanding of the situation.

Several different factors in declining enrollment will require the writing of policy. One of the most necessary ones is a policy for reduction in force if in fact the school board decides that reduction in force is inevitable. It should go without saying that the board should be reasonably certain that reduction in force is their best alternative before the writing of such a policy.

An Educational Research Service Information Aid states that "Once a reduction in force is deemed unavoidable, the job of selecting and notifying teachers affected can never be a pleasant one, but the school board with a firm policy and administrative regulations in this area can reduce minunderstandings on the part of administrators and teachers and

protect itself against grievance procedures brought by teachers who are affected by the layoff."[13]

A model policy for teacher lay-off and re-employment procedure appearing in the above mentioned information reads as follows:

> Board Policy: Teacher Lay-Off and Re-employment Procedure
>
> When a reduction in the district's teaching staff is expected for the coming year due to a loss of students in ADA, educational programs or curriculum changes, the following procedure will be used:
>
> The superintendent and assistant superintendent shall determine the area, subject, or program that will lose staff positions for the coming year.
>
> The personnel office will determine how many staff positions in the area, subject, or program to lose units, are planning to retire, resign, or go on leave for the coming year. That number shall reduce the amount of staff members to be laid off for the coming year.
>
> A teacher to be laid off, who is certified in another subject area or subject shall have the right to a vacant position in such area or subject.
>
> Laid-off teachers shall have first option for accepting re-remployment, on a seniority basis, as vacancies for which they are certified open. No new teachers shall be employed for an area, subject, or program until all teachers laid off from such assignment have been provided with the opportunity of filling the positions.
>
> Upon re-employment, all rights related to salary, fringe benefits, and seniority shall be fully restored.
>
> Laid-off teachers may pay the total premium for group life and hospitalization insurance for a period not to exceed fifteen months.[13]

This E. R. S. Information Aid provides six different models similar to the one above covering board policy, negotiation agreements, and administrative regulations. Other problems such as busing and

utilization of surplus resources other than staff and buildings also need to be developed separately in order to properly administer the changes caused by declining enrollments.

Bargaining for RIF

According to a November 14, 1977, article in Education USA, reductions in force policies are moving up as a teacher bargaining item. In Pennsylvania, Virginia and Nebraska, state education groups report that RIF policies are a major bargaining issue. Pennsylvania teachers have reported success in suspending RIF policies by setting guidelines for determining layoffs based on seniority.

The Nebraska legislature is presently considering a law which would require a board of education to negotiate a RIF policy which would include the negotiating teacher evaluation procedures.

Teacher Evaluation

It is the opinion of this presentor that mechanics for the implementation of teacher evaluation procedures is crucial to the development of any RIF policy. It would seem that the boards of education and administrators should be ready to assume the responsibility for retaining the brightest and best staff for a school district. While most teachers, many administrators and some school boards contend that it is impossible to determine who is the brightest and best teacher on a given faculty, it is the opinion of this presentor that this attitude reflects an evasion of responsibility.

In the opinion of this presentor the relative effectiveness of a classroom teacher can be measured under the following conditions:

1. Evaluations are made at least four times a year.
2. Evaluations are based on:
    A. Classroom visitation.
    B. Conferences between evaluator and teacher.
    C. Areas of concern are clearly delineated.
    D. Follow up sessions are held regularly between teacher and evaluator.
3. Evaluators are given authority and responsibility by the board of education for making precise judgements relative to the perceived success of the teacher.
4. Evaluators are protected by the board of education, through insurance, against mal-practice suits.
5. The board of education employs evaluators who are both capable and willing to do their assignment.

A sample evaluative instrument which is in the process of being field tested in the Wayne, Nebraska school district may be found as an addendum to this paper.

Summary

The declining enrollment problem, while not a universal phenomenon, is widespread throughout the United States. Literature on the subject indicates that communities have different philosophies about whether expenses should decline along with the delcine in enrollments. Regard-

less of the philosophy, however, declining enrollments are essentially a people problem and policies thus become essential to the orderly implementation of change.

TABLE 1

Status of RIF Policies in Selected Nebraska Schools

School	RIF Policy Yes	No
Bellvue	X	
Wahoo		X
Millard		X
York	X	
Papillion (working)		X
Aurora		X
Plattsmouth		X
Hastings		X
Lexington		X
Scottsbluff	X	
Chadron		X
Alliance		X
Columbus		X
Ogallala		X
Sidney		X
Minden	X	
Ralston	X	
Grand Island		X
Auburn		X
Kearney		X
Beatrice	X	
South Sioux		X
Crete		X
Nebraska City (working)		X
Omaha (working)		X
Norfolk		X
Fremont		X
Broken Bow		X
North Platte (working)		X
Lincoln	X	
Wayne (working)		X

LE 2

Analysis of RIF Policies in Seven Nebraska School Districts

Policy Consideration								f
Length of Service in District	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Competency Ratings				X		X		2
Certification--Endorsements		X	X	X	X		X	5
Retention of 2 yrs. Sal. Sch. Rts.		X	X		X	X	X	5
Recall Priviledges		X	X		X	X	X	5
Affirmative Action Reg.		X	X		X	X		4
Extra Duty Assignments			X			X		2
Recommendation by Supt/Prin		X	X	X	X		X	5
Notification	X	X	X	90D	X		X	6
Attrition		X	X		X		X	4
Continuing Contract Law		X	X		X			3
Special Qualifications		X			X			2
Administrative Regulations		X			X			2
Substitute Rights					X			1
Decision by Board						X		1
Less than two years Service							X	1
Degree--Preparation			X				X	2
Right of Appeal	X	X						2

Bibliography

1. Arveson, Raymond G. "Implications of Decreasing Student Enrollments," A speech given at the 106th Annual Convention of the American Association of School Administrators, Feb., 1974, 4 pp. ED 087120.

2. Coleman, Peter. "School Division Planning in an Era of Declining Enrollments," Occasional Paper No. 19. Winnipeg Manitoba Association of School Trustees, 1973, 15 pp. ED 075 924.

3. "Declining School Enrollments," U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare National Institute of Education, 1975, 16 pp. ED 117 832.

4. Eisenberger, Katherine E. and Keough, William F. Declining Enrollment, What to Do, American Association of School Administrators, Arlington, Virginia, 1974, 58 pp.

5. "Extent of Declining Enrollments," ERS Bulletin, Education Research Service, Inc., Arlington, Virginia, March 1975, 6 pp.

6. Keough, William F. "How to make the most out of Declining Enrollment," American School Board Journal, 162 6 (June 1975), pp. 40-43.

7. "Local Policies for Reduction in Force," ERS Information Aid, Education Research Service, Inc., Arlington, Virginia, April 1975, 18 pp.

8. Nolte, Chester M. "Follow these "How's" when you must cut your Staff," American School Board Journal, 163:7 (July 1976), pp. 26-28

9. Nolte, Chester M. "How to tell Which Teacher to Keep and Which to Lay Off," American School Board Journal, 163:7 (June 1976), pp. 28-31.

10. Sargent, Cyril G. "Fewer Pupils, Surplus Space: The Problem of School Shrinkage," Phi Delta Kappan, 56, 5 (Jan., 1975), pp. 352-357.

11. Sealey, Robert D. "Declining Enrollments: Implications," A speech given to the 107th Annual Convention of the American Association of School Administrators, Feb. 23, 1975, 12 pp. ED 106 942.

12. Sieradski, Karen. "Implications of Declining Enrollments for Schools," NAESP School Leadership Digest Second Series, No. 4. 1975, 37 pp. ED 114 906.

13. "Some Local Policies on Reductions in Force for Professional Personnel," Education Research Service Information Aid No. 15, Washington D.C. Educational Research Service, 1973, 18 pp. ED 078 554.

14. Thomas, Donald. "Five Ways to Save Money with Declining Enrollments," U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare National Institute of Education, 1975, 16 pp. ED 117 831.

INDIVIDUALIZED TEACHER PROFILE

Wayne Public Schools
Wayne, Nebraska
1978

Instructions for Evaluator:

Please check at least one response to each statement as found in the evaluative instrument. Some statements may call for more than one response. You are requested to explain any qualifications to your responses under the comment section of the instrument. The responses checked should reflect your own best judgement regarding teacher performance based on your observations of the teacher in a classroom setting. Please ask the teacher to sign the evaluation as an indication that he/she has read it. This signature does not indicate agreement with the evaluation.

It is important that a total score be given to this evaluation. It is also important to go over the evaluation with the classroom teacher.

Francis R. Haun, Ed.D.
Superintendent

WAYNE, NEBRASKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Individualized Teacher Profile as Perceived by Building Principal

Teacher:

Assignment:

Date:

Evaluator:

Sources of Evaluative Data:

1. Lesson preparation by teacher for fall school term is of: Check Rating

A. Consistent high quality	(4)	_____
B. Above average	(3)	_____
C. Average quality	(2)	_____
D. Below average quality	(1)	_____
E. Unacceptable quality	(0)	_____

Comments: Item Score _____

2. Classroom delivery of lesson is of:

A. Consistent high quality	(4)	_____
B. Above average quality	(3)	_____
C. Average quality	(2)	_____

(con't. on next page)

D. Below average quality (1) _____

E. Unacceptable quality (0) _____

Comments: Item Score _____

3. Teacher planning for individual differences of pupils is:

A. Consistently of great value (4) _____

B. Generally of above average value (3) _____

C. Generally of average value (2) _____

D. Generally in need of improvement (1) _____

E. Not observable (0) _____

Comments: Item Score _____

4. Instructional goal implementation by teacher for pupils is:

A. Consistently of great value (4) _____

B. Generally of above value (3) _____

C. Generally of average value (2) _____

D. Generally in need of improvement (1) _____

E. Not observable (0) _____

Comments: Item Score _____

5. Instructional goal evaluation by teacher/principal is:

A. Consistently productive	3.	_____
B. Generally productive	2.	_____
C. Seldom productive	1.	_____
D. Not attempted	0.	_____
Comments:	Item Score	_____

6. Assessment of pupil progress by teacher is:
(Check all appropriate response)

A. Consistently fair	1.	_____
B. Based on accurate data	1.	_____
C. Accompanied by pupil-teacher conference	1.	_____
D. Consistent with grading philosophy of school	1.	_____
E. Defensible	1.	_____
Comments:	Item Score	_____

7. Teacher accessibility to students is:
(Check all appropriate responses)

A. Excellent inside of classroom	(3)	_____
B. Good inside of classroom	(2)	_____
C. Excellent outside of classroom	(3)	_____
D. Good outside of classroom	(2)	_____
E. Often a problem for students	(1)	_____
Comments:	Item Score	_____

8. Teachers' contribution to total school program is:

A. Consistently of great value	(4)	_____
B. Generally of above average value	(3)	_____
C. Average	(2)	_____
D. Generally of little value	(1)	_____
E. Unable to be observed	(0)	_____

Comments: Item Score _____

9. As compared to other classroom teachers that I have observed I would rate this teacher's classroom management skills as:

A. Superior	(4)	_____
B. Above average	(3)	_____
C. Average	(2)	_____
D. Below average	(1)	_____
E. Unsatisfactory	(0)	_____

Comments: Item Score _____

10. As compared to other classroom teachers that I have evaluated I would give this teacher an overall rating of:

A. Excellent, with potential generally reached	(4)	_____
B. Excellent potential but not yet fully developed	(3)	_____

(con't. on next page)

C. Average but with potential (2) _____

D. Below average but with potential (1) _____

E. Below average with limited potential (0) _____

Comments: Item Score _____

	Score
A. Score last recent evaluation:	_____
Date:	_____
By:	_____
B. Score this evaluation	_____
Date:	_____
C. Score goal for next evaluation	_____
Date:	_____

Signed evaluator _____

Signed teacher _____